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Liz Carpenter Is Out Front In LBJ-Years Book Race

By VERA GLASER

WASHINGTON (N A N A)—Johnson administration officials are quietly making plans to feather their nests after January 21, 1969.

The literary leftovers of LBJ's regime are up for grabs, with the nation's most prominent publishers breathing down each others' necks in the race for "now-it-can-be-told" material. They're dangling six figures in front of Mrs. Elizabeth Carpenter, the First Lady's witty press secretary, who says:

"I'm going to write a book if I have to mimeograph it and put it out myself, but I haven't signed any contracts yet."

PRENTICE-HALL offered Mrs. Carpenter a $100,000 advance for what she says will be a light-hearted book, "A Personal Story of Handling the White House." McGraw-Hill "upped that by a lot," according to Frank Taylor, general manager of their book division. Doubleday, which now publishes Kennedy manuscripts in the wake of the family's ruckus with Harper and Row over the William Manchester book, is also in the Liz race.

The First Lady's first lady apparently is not above comparison shopping. According to one publisher, she reminded him that "they offered $750,000 to Mrs. Martin Luther King." Subsequently the King advance was quoted in a news story as a half million dollars.

"FROM THE MOMENT I came into this task, "Mrs. Carpenter said, "I have known I wouldn't like myself very much if I didn't do a book at the end of the time. A lot of publishers talked to me then. I just told them to go away because I didn't have the freedom to do it. After March 31 (the date President Johnson announced he would not run for reelection), they began again. It's at the top of my agenda and I'll decide soon."

Most avidly sought by publishers, of course, are members of the First Family themselves. The President has said he will write "three or four volumes." Lady Bird has been saving material for five years and daughter Lynda Bird Robb has been keeping a diary.

HARRY MACPHERSON, the President's counsel, is considered one of the finest writers on the White House staff, but plans to practice law.

Another top presidential assistant, Joseph Califano, is expected to go into private law practice.

George Reedy, who left his position as LBJ's press secretary to become president of Struthers Research Corporation and recently was "borrowed back" by the White House, plans to stay with LBJ through the election. Then he may write a syndicated column.